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WASHINGTON TIMES
22 October 1985

Letters

Kwitny responds to Kowet article

Once again, I must reply to a piece of journalism so shoddy that its author never called me before expounding at length on what I allegedly have done and believed. Don Kowet's Oct. 1 article also was unfair to others at *The Wall Street Journal*, who may speak for themselves.

I have never written, suggested, or for a minute been persuaded that Michael Ledeen, Claire Sterling, or anyone else was complicitous in a "CIA scheme to get Mehmet Ali Agca to say that the Soviets and Bulgarians were behind the plot to kill the pope." Your report that I suggested this takes you far beyond the confines of the relatively small ambiguity I regrettably created in my Aug. 8 article.

The afternoon before publication, I was told to cut the equivalent of two typed pages out of the lengthy material to be published. To my regret, not realizing the confusion it would invite, I deleted the chronology and context of a meeting Francesco Pazienza described between him and Claire Sterling (which she denies having), and of meetings she acknowledges between her and another Italian intelligence official, Gen. Guiseppe Santovito.

Mr. Pazienza told me his meeting with her occurred in October or November of 1980 and concerned the general topic of terrorism, specifically including her research on what became her book *The Terror Network* and his research on Billy Carter's meetings with PLO leaders. The papal shooting didn't occur until months later. I found Mr. Pazienza generally uncontradicted on such details, and Mrs. Sterling twice angrily hung up the phone when I asked her to provide her own account.

One reason for noting this is that Mr. Pazienza faces criminal charges for conspiring to blame right-wing terrorism on leftists. Gen. Santovito would be a co-defendant if he hadn't died after his arrest. The notion of a leftist terror network is the thesis not only of Mrs. Sterling and Mr. Ledeen, but also, as I noted in print, of their colleague and your editor, Arnaud de Borchgrave, which fact might help a reader understand your slanted account.

Considering this context, every word in my Aug. 8 story is to my knowledge true. My sloppy abridgement "may have left the unintended and erroneous impression that Mr. Pazienza supplied information to Mrs. Sterling regarding the attempted assassination of the pope," as Managing Editor Norman Pearlstine wrote — not in "unmistakable lawyer-ese" as you alleged, but in literal truth. My sloppiness involved one paragraph from two days of voluminous material.

To say that my book, *Endless Enemies*, "revealed" my "Marxist slant" is to ignore its contents, from the first chapter (charging the Soviet Union, a "totalitarian empire," with deceit and aggression) to the last (a comparison of a dozen paired post-colonial countries attempting to demonstrate that in each case the more free-market country outperformed its more socialist twin).

Your selected excerpt from an interview in which I blame problems on certain banks and large companies is grossly unfair in that it ignores the panoply of other targets in the book. Your one-sided characterization of what I wrote about Fidel Castro is similarly unfair. And I took pains not to single out any administration or party for disproportionate criticism.

Regardless of what your anonymous sources say, the piece on Geraldine Ferraro last year wasn't a rejected news story, but was written by me expressly for the editorial page at my suggestion. This suggestion was approved by editors on both the news and editorial sides. Alexander Cockburn is a dear friend whose intellect and wit are constantly stimulating, but anyone who believes that we are ideological mates has simply never shared a table with us.

Finally, I am glad I work for a news department that observes the basic journalistic rule of getting the other side.

JONATHAN KWITNY
The Wall Street Journal
New York

• *We think Don Kowet had it right. In a highly flattering review of Mr. Kwitny's book in* The Washington Post, *reviewer Jonathan Steele of* The Guardian *wrote that "Kwitny goes beyond the standard liberal line, which can be summed up in the phrase 'the Soviets may be doing terrible things in the world, but why does the United States have to follow the same pattern?' Kwitny has the courage to say that 'except in areas contiguous to Soviet borders, where the might of Soviet ground forces can be brought to bear ... [the Soviet record] stacks up as less threatening than the U.S. record.' " — The Editor.*

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